

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 22, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

Missouri farmers and ranchers are facing unprecedented times of uncertainty. Farmers in my state deserve stability at home and in the international marketplace, and that includes a clear picture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed \$12 billion trade assistance package. With severe drought conditions, record low farm incomes, and now a self-inflicted trade war, Missouri farmers cannot withstand additional loss in prices.

Missouri's farmers understandably desire trade rather than federal handouts. The United States has fought for years to open new markets around the world for our agricultural products, and this trade war shuts farmers out of critical markets and moves our global trading power in the wrong direction. Rather than creating a temporary fix for farmers and leaving them dependent on an unsustainable use of tax dollars, we should get back to opening markets for our farmers and aggressively enforcing our trade laws.

While I view any aid package as only a temporary bandage and not part of a larger solution, it is important that the Administration's plan to release \$12 billion in government assistance contain critical elements of fairness to protect Missouri farmers and Missouri taxpayers.

First, any federal assistance program must support family farmers, not prop up foreign-owned agribusinesses from the very countries that are targeting our farmers. While foreign owned and corporate agriculture ventures may have the ability to internalize losses, Missouri farm families do not. Financial assistance should be targeted to farmers like those in my state who find themselves working every day to keep their family farm in business.

Additionally, any aid must be made available quickly. As the end of the growing season approaches, farmers are starting to make decisions about next year's crop. In order to make sound management decisions, assistance dollars should get to Missouri farmers sooner rather than later.

Finally, I ask that you consider using average yield data of years past to maintain fairness to farmers facing natural disasters across the Midwest. Not only will the drought severely impact Missouri yield numbers for this year, waiting for this year's yield numbers to determine aid amounts would result in an aid package that provides too little too late.

With farmers already struggling to make ends meet, Missourians cannot afford market losses because of irresponsible trade negotiations. Our current trade war is a self-inflicted wound that \$12 billion simply will not solve. I encourage you to show your commitment to family farmers by resolving current trade disputes and in the meantime targeting assistance to family farmers who need it most. Continued damage to market access will have permanent and pervasive impacts on Missouri's economy that has the potential to impact the landscape of farm country for decades to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" written in a more compact, looped style, and the last name "McCaskill" written in a more extended, flowing style.

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator